

# **Children's Cabinet Work Group on Student Safety**

***Tuesday, August 21, 2018***  
*Patrick Henry Building, West Reading Room*  
*Richmond, Virginia*

## ***MEETING MINUTES***

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### **Members Present:**

#### ***Co-Chairs***

**The Honorable Brian Moran**, Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security

**The Honorable Atif Qarni**, Secretary of Education

#### ***Members***

**Donna Michaelis**, Manager, Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

**Lisa Floyd, Ed.D.**, Deputy Director of Education, Department of Juvenile Justice

**Nicole Gore**, Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Department of Behavioral Health and Development Services

**Ellen White**, Retired Judge, 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts

**Chief Kelvin Wright**, Chief of Police, City of Chesapeake Police Department

**Brian Hieatt**, Sheriff, County of Tazewell

**Bobby Kipper**, School Safety and Discipline Specialist, Department of Education

**Patrick Stanfield, Ed.D.**, Principal, Midlothian Middle School

**Fred Orelove, Ph.D.**, Co-Chair of Schools Committee, Greater Richmond Trauma Informed Community Network

**Richard Ponti**, Director of Safety and Loss Control, Virginia Beach Public Schools

**Dolores Robison, Ph.D.**, Supervisor of Threat Assessment, Prince William County Public Schools

**Cole Fairchild**, Student, Charlottesville High School

**Benjamin Fernandez**, School Psychologist and Coordinator of Prevention Services, Loudoun County Public Schools

**Tyrone Foster**, President-Elect, Virginia School Board Association

**Mike Lawhorn**, School Resource Officer, Campbell County Sheriff's Office

**Stanley Jones, Ed.D.**, Superintendent, Danville Public Schools

**Myra Legg**, Executive Director, Virginia Parent Teacher Association (sent in place of Sarah Gross)

**Jeffrey Johnson**, Principal, Great Bridge High School

**Sarah Snyder**, Coordinator of Counseling, Arlington Public Schools

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**Elisabeth Harman**, Director of Special Education & Pupil Personnel Services, Roanoke County Public Schools

**Members Absent:**

**Sarah Gross**, President, Virginia Parent Teacher Association

**Carol Medawar**, Virginia Director, National Education Association

**Staff Present:**

**Nicky Zamostny**, Assistant Secretary, Secretariat of Public Safety and Homeland Security

**Chidi Uche**, Special Assistant, Secretariat of Education

**Elizabeth Parker**, Policy Assistant, Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

**Laureen Hyman**, Executive Assistant, Department of Criminal Justice Services

**Opening Remarks**

*Brian Moran, Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security*

*Atif Qarni, Secretary of Education*

At 1:04pm, Secretary Moran opened the meeting and welcomed all those in attendance. He provided a summary of the first work group meeting on July 19, 2018. At this meeting, the work group heard presentations from DCJS and VDOE regarding what Virginia is currently doing at the state level to form best practices in student safety. The facilitated discussion and panel of local experts covered a host of issues, including SROs, Security Equipment Grants, school counselor ratios, and trauma-informed care. Secretary Moran then provided an overview of the second meeting. He thanked the 12 additional stakeholders from the school safety community who attended the work group meeting to offer their insight on a series of panels. After an outline of the agenda, including the one hour allotted for facilitated discussion, the members of the work group introduced themselves.

**Approval of Minutes**

Secretary Moran called for a motion to approve the draft minutes from the July 19, 2018 meeting. Judge White moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Student Panel: Youth Perspectives on School Safety**

*Colleen Trott, Class of 2019, Powhatan High School*

*Emily LeSueur, Class of 2015, Fluvanna County High School*

*Morgan Rhudy, Class of 2020, James River High School*

*Cole Fairchild, Class of 2019, Charlottesville High School*

*Moderator: Dr. Orelove*

Dr. Orelove had the members of the panel introduce themselves. He then asked what makes them feel safe at school. Colleen mentioned that trust is an important component: as a student, you have to feel as though you can trust school professionals to keep you safe. Dr. Orelove asked the students what concerns them the most about school safety today. Emily mentioned that in order to feel safe, students must feel accepted in school and be able to be themselves without fear of what is going to happen to them. Cole mentioned allowing for more transparency in emergency preparedness, and planning. Morgan emphasized the importance of including students in conversations about their own safety going forward. In addition to each panelist stressing the importance of including students in conversations about school safety, they also stressed the importance of improving messaging to students to ensure that they are aware of the services and programs offered by the schools.

### **Panel: Supports and Strategies for Suicide Prevention**

*Christy Letsom, Chair, Virginia Suicide Prevention Coalition*

*Alexandra Jansson, Coordinator, Virginia Violent Death Reporting System, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Virginia Department of Health*

*Dr. Sterling Ransone, Jr., Physician, Riverside Health System*

*Moderator Ms. Gore*

Ms. Gore opened the panel inquiring about the number of school age suicide deaths per year. Ms. Jansson responded that between 2003 and 2015, there were 340 suicide deaths of children between the ages of 10 and 17. The top causes of suicides in Virginia are firearms and asphyxia. Ms. Gore inquired about how we can prevent such a high number of suicide deaths by firearms. Ms. Letsom mentioned the program "Virginia Lock and Talk," which provides free gun and cable locks in partnership with gun owners and gun sellers. She also suggested encouraging parents to keep more control over their medicine cabinets. Dr. Ransone mentioned physicians are permitted to ask patients "Do you have firearms at home? Are they secured?" Furthermore, emergency rooms do not have a code on medical records to indicate that a person was treated for a potential suicide attempt. When said patient is referred to a doctor outside of the ER, the doctor may not be aware that the patient is believed to have attempted suicide. Finally, each of the panelists stressed the need for better training on how to talk with students about suicide and how to ask appropriate questions to determine whether an individual may be at-risk.

### **Panel: Threat Assessment and Threat Assessment Teams (TATs)**

*1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Mark Depatie, Supervisor, School Resource Officer Unit, Prince William County Police*

*Dr. Dolores Robison, Supervisor of Threat Assessment, Prince William County Public Schools*

*Carolyn Lamm, Supervisor for Student Support Services, Fauquier County Public Schools*

*Leah Shorb, Assistant Principal, Cedar Lee Middle School, Fauquier County Public Schools*

*Anne Smith, School Psychologies, Fauquier County Public Schools*

*Moderator: Dr. Marisa Randazzo, Principal and Co-Founder, SIGMA Threat Management Associates*

The TAT from Fauquier shared a success story from their experience. Ms. Shorb explained that a report indicating that a student had been keeping a list of names of other students in his binder. The TAT spoke with the student even though he had never had discipline issues. The TAT initially spoke to the student as a small group to ensure that he felt comfortable and asked a series of questions. The student's responses led the TAT to believe that he may not be a substantial threat, but the TAT continued their assessment to ensure they captured all necessary information. The TAT contacted the parent, who allowed law enforcement to visit the home. The assessment ultimately determined that the student did not pose a threat. The TAT later followed up with the student's future high school to make sure they had adequate processes in place should the situation escalate. Ms. Lamm mentioned that even if the child is low risk or no risk, the TAT follows up with every child to make sure there is a support plan in place. Dr. Robison said the biggest challenge for every school district is laying the TAT on top of existing organizational structures and resources. TATs should have a foot in both safety and security as well as student services. The panelists expressed strong support for additional training that incorporates school and law enforcement principles.

### **Facilitated Discussion**

*Moderator: Dr. Randazzo*

The work group reconvened at 3:00pm to begin facilitated discussion.

**Dr. Randazzo asked the work group what had jumped out at them thus far from the panels.**

Ms. Synder mentioned how school counselors wear different hats and often have to do administrative work as well as academic advising. The guidelines for the American School Counseling Association say that 80% of counselor time should be spent with students, 20% doing administrative work. In Virginia, the ratio is 60:40.

Secretary Qarni mentioned bringing in nonprofits to help fill the gap in mental health services. He asked whether a recommendation would be beneficial that would establish a state level list of nonprofits that should be used in schools.

Dr. Jones pointed out that mental health messaging should start at a classroom level from a teacher.

Mr. Foster emphasized funding as an issue that impacts all localities in determining how to develop and sustain support positions and programs in schools. Is it plausible to give teachers more responsibility? Should they be psychologists? There was discussion about implementing a new kind of training, potentially Mental Health First Aid training.

Secretary Qarni mentioned that there can oftentimes be a stigma attached to seeing a guidance counselor. He named a potential recommendation as having telehealth, so that students could communicate remotely with guidance counselors.

Dr. Robison suggested a recommendation should be using a screening tool in schools to standardize as well as demystify suicide prevention.

Ms. Michaelis suggested bridging the gap between middle and high schools and high schools and colleges so that more information sharing can be possible, particularly with respect to threat assessment. She also suggested that we should consider incorporating a position like a behavioral interventionist that can serve as an intermediary between the classroom and the administration to address behavioral challenges/changes that arise with students.

Secretary Qarni recommended having a recommendation that would promote schools utilizing a modern, student-driven messaging campaign around suicide prevention.

Cpt. Lawhorm mentioned the importance of communication between SROs, school professionals, and the court system as well as monitoring social media.

Mr. Ponti suggested a recommendation should be a state-compiled guide to what schools are allowed to share about a student without violating FERPA.

### **Closing Remarks**

Secretary Moran closed the meeting at 4:00pm. He reminded the work group that the next meeting is September 25<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 to 4:00pm in the Patrick Henry Building West Reading Room again. He thanked all participants for their attendance.